



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

**Farm Services
Agency**

**Rural
Development**

TO: All NRCS, FSA, and RD Employees in Pennsylvania

DATE: January 10, 2008


It is USDA policy that sexual harassment in any form is inappropriate and unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated. Any employee – supervisory, non-supervisory, or managerial – engaging in sexual harassment is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal. This policy applies to USDA employees in their dealings with Federal and non-Federal employees and in their dealings with persons employed under contract with the USDA. It also applies to our dealings with vendors, applicants, borrowers, and other customers. In addition, managers and supervisors are subject to disciplinary action if they tolerate sexual harassment, fail to take appropriate action on reports of sexual harassment, or retaliate against employees who report or file complaints of sexual harassment.

USDA regulations define sexual harassment as “participating in coercive or repeated unsolicited and unwelcome verbal comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature OR by using implicit or explicit coercive sexual behavior in the process of conducting agency business or to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, or job of an employee.” Virtually any sexually-oriented language, conduct, or behavior can be viewed as sexual harassment if it is unwelcome. Related to sexual harassment is sex-role stereotyping. Although this type of behavior is not illegal, it can lead to sex discrimination and sexual harassment. It also interferes with the accomplishment of duties and generally creates a negative work environment.

The Pennsylvania FAC believes that you have a legal and ethical right to work in a work environment free from any form of sexual harassment or unwelcome sexual attention. Every USDA employee must share the responsibility for preventing sexual harassment. Employees are responsible for their own conduct and should regularly review personal behavior for potentially harassing elements. Employees must know and support the USDA policy on sexual harassment. Employees must be familiar with their rights and responsibilities under USDA policy. Finally, employees should confront and report incidents of sexual harassment.

If you are sexually harassed, the decision to take action and the type of action to take is a very personal one based on the circumstances and the individuals involved. If possible, it is recommended that you confront the harasser directly to stop the behavior. Make it clear that the behavior is unwelcome. For example, say “I feel uncomfortable when you do/say ____.” Then request a change in behavior: “Please stop doing/saying now.” If the unwelcome behavior is severe or persistent, it is recommended you put your communication in writing. For self-protection in the event the harassment becomes persistent, you may need to document incidents and collect evidence. If you feel you cannot confront the harasser directly, report the conduct to your supervisor or to the harasser’s supervisor. You may also seek assistance or advice from an EEO Counselor. (You may also request EEO Counseling at any point in the process.) If management is not responsive or if the harassment continues, you may request EEO Counseling. The counselor can provide you with guidance in dealing with the situation, as well as guidance in pursuing a civil rights complaint.

Numbers for reaching an EEO Counselor for each agency are as follows: NRCS: (301) 504-2181, (866) 672-7395, (301) 504-2439 (voice or TTY); FSA: (315) 477-6310, and RD: (800) 787-8821.

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